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ROCK ART

Petroglyphs and Pictographs
of Southeast Alaska

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1994

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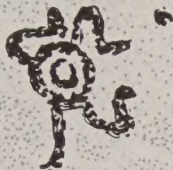
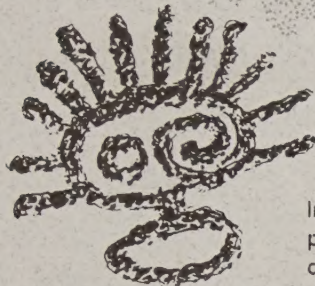
United States
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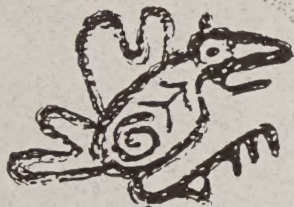
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ROCK LEGACY

Archaeologists are just beginning to unravel the mysteries surrounding the ancient people who lived on the many islands that are now part of the Tongass National Forest. There is presently no way of knowing how old the symbols are except by association with living sites or by comparing how the designs may have evolved.



Indian religious leaders, called shamans, probably made many of the early petroglyphs during ceremonial rites to pay respect to the spirits and bring luck to their clan.



WHERE TO LOOK!

Pictographs are most often found in sheltered rock overhangs or caves high above the waters edge where they are protected from the weather.



Petroglyphs can be found near the coastline at or below the high tide mark. Many times they are located close to a salmon spawning stream where they face the open sea and may have welcomed the return of the salmon people.

Many pictographs are associated with burials. This pictograph commemorates an incident when a killer whale overturned a canoe.



When the Tlingits first saw a Russian sailing ship, they believed it was the return of their mythical creator, Raven.

When we view these ancient pictures, we are transported back in time to a world we can only know from the stories the rocks reveal.

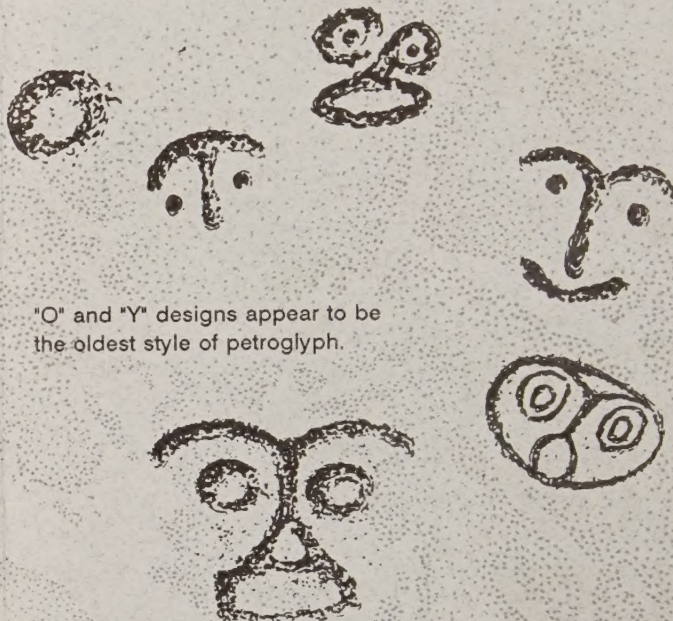


Rock designs may have recorded births, deaths, potlatch celebrations, or important natural events.



ROCK CLUES

The oldest rock drawings appear to have been made by a maritime people who migrated here as early as 10,000 years ago. Archaeologists have found similar abstract symbols along the coasts of both Siberia and Alaska.



"O" and "Y" designs appear to be the oldest style of petroglyph.

The more recent petroglyphs are representations of animals, fish or supernatural beings and were probably created by the ancestors of the modern Indians.



YOU CAN HELP

The next few years are crucial to the preservation of rock art. Destruction can occur from both natural and human causes. However, vandalism and theft continue to be the greatest threat to the future of this important heritage resource. If we deface or destroy a portion of the rock art, it is like tearing pages from a great mystery novel.

ART ON ROCKS

Humans have painted or pecked designs on rocks or walls of caves for thousands of years. The tales the symbols tell offer us a glimpse into the lifestyle of an ancient people and how they adapted to the world as they knew it.



Pictographs of this type appear along the entire Northwest Coast.

A **petroglyph** is pecked or ground into the surface of a rock.

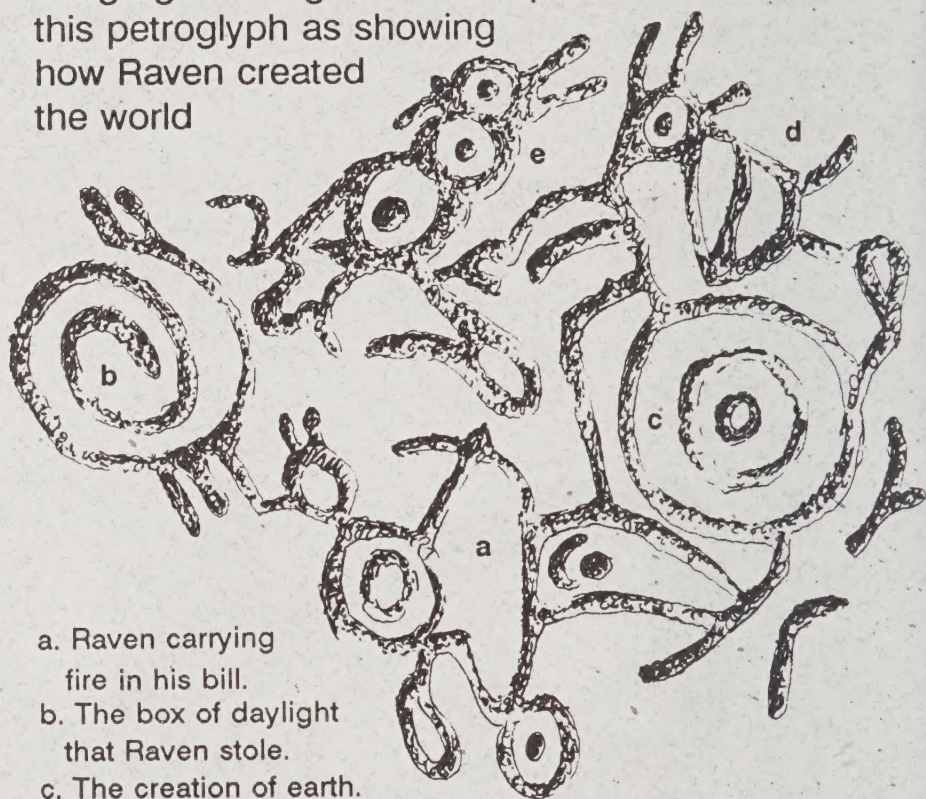


Petroglyphs of this style were often used to mark a clan's personal territory.

Native designs symbolize a communication with the spirits of nature. They may tell of a birth or death, record an historical event, or act as navigational aids.

STORIES THE ROCKS TELL

Long ago a Tlingit elder interpreted this petroglyph as showing how Raven created the world



- a. Raven carrying fire in his bill.
- b. The box of daylight that Raven stole.
- c. The creation of earth.
- d. The North Wind brings the weather.
- e. The Wolf Crest representing the guardian of fresh water.

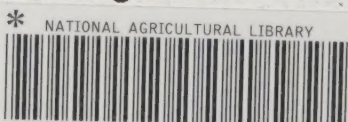
PHOTO HINTS

- *Use a polarizing filter to reduce glare.
- *Side lighting is important.
- *Maximum shadows early in the morning or late evening bring out the design.
- *Night shots with artificial side lighting.
- *Never chalk, paint, or in any way alter the art.

Much of the rock art on the Tongass has yet to be discovered. If you think you may have found a new petroglyph or pictograph, or you witness vandalism or looting of an archaeological site, please notify the nearest Forest Service office. With respect and integrity, we can save this vital link with the past for our children in the future.

TAKE HOME A MEMORY!

The Northwest Coast Indians created some of the most outstanding rock art in the world. You are encouraged to take home a memory by taking photos.



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